# A Secret Torch

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# A Secret Torch

by Clouds (myheadinthecoudsnotcomingdown)

Summary

A reporter figures out the secret of One for All and now Izuku has to deal with not only the fact that his biggest secret is now common knowledge, but also people's reactions to the fact that he kept it a secret in the first place.
Well, no one said that being All Might's successor was going to be easy.

Notes

I have had this idea in my head for about as long as I've been in the fandom, and I've always wondered why there aren't more fics where this happens. Enjoy!

Izuku woke up naturally, which was the first indication that today was going to be a weird day. He checked his phone to see why his alarm hadn't gone off, only to realize it was completely dead. He groaned as he remembered that it had been at 2% the night before. He'd could've sworn he'd plugged it in last night, but either he'd been too tired to remember, or the charger had come loose sometime during the night.

He sighed and plugged it in before glancing at the limited edition All Might clock that hung above his desk. He leapt out of bed and immediately started putting on his uniform, there was only half an hour left before class and he still had to get ready, eat breakfast, finish Midnight's homework, and make it on time! He glanced over at his charging phone, which currently read 1%. He'd just have to come get it at lunch, because he didn't think Aizawa would be all that happy with him if he tried to charge it in the classroom.

Izuku decided to pull a Kacchan and leave the tie in his room since he didn't have any time to try and make it look acceptable, then grabbed his book bag and ran down to the common room. What could he eat fast? Toast, maybe?

He was jolted out of his racing thoughts when he reached the bottom of the stairs and realized that everyone was crowded around the TV instead of rushing to get ready for school as usual. Even Iida wasn't doing anything! Okay, that was weird, but maybe there'd been a villain attack that morning and it was on the news?

Whatever it was, though, it wouldn't stop Aizawa from taking roll, though, so Izuku decided to make his way toward the kitchen instead of watching TV with his classmates. The movement must have caught his classmates' eyes, though, because suddenly every single of them turned to stare at him. Izuku fidgeted awkwardly at the attention. This was weird, right?

Finally, he cleared his throat to break the silence, "Um, good morning?"

It was like a spell had been broken and Uraraka ran forward and threw her arms around him, tears in her eyes, "I'm so sorry!"

Izuku felt his stomach sink even as he awkwardly patted her back in what he hoped was a comforting matter, "Umm, okay? What are you apologizing for, though?"

She shook her head, "No, I'm not...it's not an apology, we just wanted

to…um…”

“We just wanted to let you know we’re here for you, Midoriya.” Iida finished. “We know how angry you must feel that he kept such a big secret from you, so no matter how you’re feeling, it is our duty as your classmates to support you during this trying time.”

“Yeah, I can’t believe he didn’t tell you!” Kaminari said. “I’d feel pretty betrayed if it were me.”

Izuku was totally lost. He looked at his classmates in confusion, “What are you talking about?”

“All Might!” Mineta said. “You two are so close, and yet he didn’t even tell you!”

“Stop that.” Yaoyorozu chided. “All Might never told *anyone* .” She turned to Midoriya and smiled sadly, “That being said, you have always been closer with him than any of us were, so it’s understandable how you must be feeling. And like Iida said, we’re here for you.”

None of this was making Izuku any less confused, and all of it was making his anxiety go through the roof. All Might’s secret? They couldn’t be talking about his small might form, that was revealed months ago at Kamino. Was it his rivalry with All for One? No, everyone knew about that too. Finally he just looked at them, as confused as ever, “What are you talking about? What secret?”

His classmates looked at one another hesitantly, except Todoroki, who was looking almost like the cat who got the canary, and Kacchan, who was looking at his classmates like they were all idiots, but that wasn’t unusual. Kirishima apparently decided that he should be the one to bite the bullet and explain the situation, because he stepped forward and put a hand on Izuku’s shoulder.

“You know, his quirk?”

Izuku went numb, they couldn’t *know,* could they?

“Wait, Midoriya, did you not look at the news this morning?”

Izuku shook his head numbly, “My phone was dead.”

His classmates exchanged glances again, then cleared a path so Izuku could sit down on the couch. Izuku tried to ignore the growing sense

of foreboding as Ashido grabbed the remote and turned up the volume on the news. Daikaku Miyagi, the-one horned newscaster, was sitting in front of a green screen that currently read, *"The Truth Behind All Might's Quirk."*

"A lot is still unknown about the secret workings of the quirk that rocked the world this morning, but one thing is certain. The world will never see our symbol of peace the same way again. Official documentation of All Might's quirk has been redacted, so we don't know the name of his quirk, but this morning, one of our colleges over at the Hero Sun newspaper released a document that contained substantial evidence that All Might's Quirk, which until now has been thought to be some kind of powerful strength enhancer, is not a natural quirk in the tradition sense. It can be passed on."

The green screen switched to show a series of photos of past heroes and Izuku felt his heart sink as he recognized some of the past holders of One for All that he'd seen within the quirk. They knew. Everyone knew.

"All Might himself was not born with his quirk. According to the research that was released this morning, which has been confirmed by our own investigative reporters, our symbol of peace received his quirk from Nana Shimura, who died in the line of duty. Her quirk was almost identical to All Might's albeit a bit weaker. This pattern seems to continue as we go back, with each successive *holder,* for lack of a better word, manifesting a stronger quirk than the last, which leads us to believe that it is some sort of stockpiling quirk. We have invited Ailena Nakamura, a top quirk specialist, and the pro hero Fatgum, who has a stockpiling quirk, to discuss this issue. Welcome!"

Nakamura and Fatgum walked into view and sat at the desk with Miyagi. Izuku was just trying to focus on not hyperventilating. His classmates were most likely concerned, but Izuku wouldn't know because he couldn't tear his eyes away from the screen.

"So, Nakamura, what do you think about all this?"

"Well, my first thought is that it is very intriguing." Nakamura said. "One of the fundamental elements of quirk theory is that quirks are something you are born with and they cannot be given or taken away. In the past few months, however, that has been proven incorrect, first with the existence of the villain known as All for One, then with Overhaul's quirk-erasing drugs, and now this. It's a very exciting time to be working in the industry."

“So, you *do* think something like this is possible?” Miyagi asked. “You don’t believe that it’s some sort of elaborate hoax?”

Nakamura shook her head, “According to our new research, transferable quirks are not only possible, but they may have even been *common* in the early days of quirks. Until recently, those accounts were viewed as legends or propaganda, but while a transferable quirk is practically unheard of these days, All Might’s quirk fits the bill perfectly. Of course, there is no way to know for sure until All Might himself confirms it, but all the evidence points to this claim of quirk transference being legitimate.”

“And Fatgum, we believe that this quirk is a stockpiling quirk, but what do you think?”

“My quirk is obviously *very* different, unless all that muscle All Might wasn’t really muscle!” Fatgum laughed at his own joke before continuing. “But in all seriousness, the thing about stockpiling quirks is that they take time. If I use up my fat stores, I’m going to have to have several weeks before I can really use my quirk again because it takes so much time to gain back that weight. All Might didn’t appear to have that limit while he was active, and, unlike me, he wasn’t responsible for adding to stores. It seems like, where I stockpile fat, All Might’s quirk stockpiles the physical strength of everyone who has ever had it.”

“Which leads to some of my concerns.” Nakamura cut in. “While this sounds spectacular, one of the major benefits of most quirks is that they include an element to protect the user from their own negative effects. For example, most fire quirk users have at least some degree of fire resistance. All Might doesn’t have that. He has the strength of multiple individuals, but his body was not born with the ability to withstand that strain. There is a distinct possibility that All Might’s quirk hurt his body and that effect is perhaps responsible for the physical decline that led to his retirement.”

“While that *is* a possibility, many people seem to believe that All Might’s retirement is due to the fact that he doesn’t *have* his quirk anymore.” Miyagi pointed out. “The last fight he participated in before his retirement was against All for One, a villain that has the ability to steal quirks. What do you have to say to our viewers who are afraid that All Might’s extremely powerful quirk is now in the hands of a villain?”

Izuku froze. People thought that All for One had One for All? Well, he

could understand why they thought that, but even if One for All could be stolen, All for One still couldn't have done that because All Might had already passed on his quirk by the time of that fight. Had...had they not figured out that Izuku was the next holder yet?

Nakamura sighed, "Unfortunately, that is perhaps the most likely possibility. All Might hasn't been able to fully access his quirk since that fight and with All for One's unique ability, it is in fact almost a guarantee that he somehow got his hands on All Might's quirk. For now, though, All for One is incarcerated, so we do not have to worry about his using that quirk against us."

"Still, the thought of a villain that was already almost as powerful as All Might adding the power of this quirk to his own strength is a terrifying thought." Miyagi said. "We have been trying to contact All Might since the news broke, but so far no one has had any luck getting a response…"

The conversation continued, but Izuku had stopped paying attention. People were panicking. They didn't know that One for All couldn't be stolen and they didn't know that it was safe and sound in the hands of a future hero. He...should he say something? But it wasn't his secret to tell! It was All Might's! But was it really a secret anymore? A lot of their other theories had been correct and it was only a matter of time before they figured out that All Might had passed his quirk on to him. Oh no, what would his friends think? What would his mom think? What was he supposed to do?

"We'll now turn it over to our correspondent Tanaka, who is standing outside the gates to UA. Tanaka?"

Izuku looked at the TV again to see the reporter standing in front of the very familiar front gates. He was far from the only reporter in the crowd and Cementoss was visible behind him doing...something.

"Thanks, Miyagi." Tanaka said. "Many reporters are here trying to get a statement from All Might about this morning's revelations. As you can see, Cementoss is behind me setting up a stage, because just a few minutes ago, Principal Nedzu of UA announced that there will be a press conference right here in about thirty minutes. I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we are eager to get some answers. Back to you."

A press conference? Was All Might going to be there? That's stupid, of course he would be, but the real question was whether he would try to

deny the existence of One for All or not.

Izuku and his classmates all jumped when the door to the dorms flew open. Izuku almost relaxed as he realized it was just Aizawa, but then his teacher strode right toward him, managing to look exhausted and utterly pissed off at the same time, “Midoriya, please tell me you have a suit.”

Izuku froze at the odd question. His last suit had been ruined on I-Island, but why would he need a suit anyways? It wasn’t for class and the only time heroes really wore suits was for parties and press conferences…oh no.

“Um, well you see, I *did* have one,” he stuttered, “but then…”

Aizawa sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Yes or no, Midoriya.”

“…No?”

Aizawa sighed again, “Yaoyorozu, please make Midoriya a suit.”

“Yes, sensei.” Yaoryorozu looked really confused, all his classmates did with the exception of maybe Kacchan, but to her credit, she created a tape measure and started taking his measurements with almost no hesitation.

“Alright, problem child, let’s review the standard procedure for press conferences. How are you supposed to act?”

Izuku was too busy panicking about being in front of all those people and talking about his secret quirk to remember anything from their media relations class. Thankfully, he wasn’t the only one in the room.

“During a press conference, a hero is supposed to act courteous and confident,” Iida said.

“Show no weaknesses.” Tokoyami added. “Or they will be as sharks in bloody waters.”

Aizawa didn’t look any less exhausted as Izuku nodded frantically along as his classmates held an impromptu review session. No one had asked *why* they were reviewing yet, which Izuku was really grateful for, but he could tell that everyone was confused.

“The main thing is that you can’t show fear, Midoriya.” Aizawa said.

“I know it’ll be your first press conference, but like Tokoyami said, you can’t let them know how scared you are. Now, to make this easier on you, you’ll only be answering questions that are addressed directly to you. Nedzu and All Might will handle the rest as well as give an opening statement to preemptively answer the most obvious questions, understand?”

Izuku wished he could stop trembling as he ignored the way his classmates exchanged confused glances, “Yes, don’t show fear, only say anything if I have to.”

Aizawa scoffed, “Yeah, that’s pretty much it. Are you ready?”

Izuku started to nod, then hesitated and shook his head, “Do you know what questions they’re going to ask?”

Aizawa sighed, “No. This situation is completely unprecedented, so I have no idea.”

It was then that Kacchan got fed up with the whole thing and groaned, “Fucking idiots! We’ve still got a few minutes while Ponytail is making your suit, and nothing those reporters are gonna ask is gonna be worse than what these idiots can come up with.” He gestured to their classmates and Iida looked like he was about to reprimand them when Kacchan continued, “So how long have you had All Might’s quirk, Deku?”

The class exploded in yells and whispers until Aizawa silenced them with a quirk-enhanced glare. Izuku took a deep breath. He could do this. Just answer the question.

“He gave it to me the morning of the entrance exam, so about eight months?”

“He didn’t give it to you until the morning of the entrance exam?!” Aizawa growled. “That idiot! Did you even have time to practice with it before you had to use it?”

Izuku hunched his shoulders slightly, “No? I mean, it wasn’t that bad, I’d been training for 10 months by that point so I had enough muscle mass that it wouldn’t blow my arms off…”

“Blow your arms off?!” Kaminari yelled.

“But it didn’t, so I’m fine and I can even control the power output now so I’m not breaking my bones anymore and…”

Aizawa raised a hand to cut him off, “Ok, if you get that question, just say eight months. Don’t ramble and *definitely* don’t mention anything about getting your arms blown off. Ok?”

Izuku nodded and Ashido raised her hand, “Ooh, ooh, me next! Me next!”

Aizawa gestured for her to continue and Ashido grinned, “So if you have had All Might’s quirk for eight months, how come he didn’t lose it until two months ago?”

Izuku opened his mouth to answer, but Aizawa beat him to the punch, “That will be part of the opening explanation, so you won’t have to answer that. Next question.”

Sero raised his hand, “What’s your quirk?”

“Oh, um,” He looked at Aizawa hesitantly, “Is there anything I’m not allowed to say?”

Aizawa rolled his eyes, “Swear words, but I don’t think that’s what you meant so, no. Assume that nothing about your quirk is going to stay secret for long and you may as well talk openly.”

Izuku nodded, “In that case, my quirk is called One for All and it’s a strength stockpiling quirk that is passed from holder to holder each generation.”

“No.” Sero said quickly. “I meant what quirk were you *born* with.”

“Don’t be an idiot, Sero!” Ashido said. “It’s obviously those black whip things.”

“But he seemed surprised about those.” Tsu pointed out.

Izuku froze, all his past experiences coming to the surface from where he’d thought he buried them forever. Would his classmates turn on him the way Kacchan had if they knew? He glanced at Aizawa, who nodded encouragingly, then at Kacchan, who refused to meet his eye.

He took a deep breath. It was going to come out eventually, right? It may as well be on his terms, “Actually, Black Whip was the fourth holder’s quirk. I’m, um, I’m naturally quirkless.”

Aizawa had to use his quirk to shut the class up again, but this time, he kept glaring even after, “If I hear of *any* of you treating Midoriya

differently because of the way he was born, I will not hesitate to expel you, understood?"

Izuku looked at the ground as a thick silence fell over the room. Apparently nobody really knew how to react to that. Suddenly, Iida's booming voice cut through the tense atmosphere, "You can access the other holder's quirks? That sounds like quite the legacy."

Izuku smiled in relief. Iida wasn't going to abandon him. He looked at his other classmates and while they seemed shocked and a bit uncomfortable, their faces didn't hold any of the hatred he was used to from his time before UA. It was going to be okay.

"Only some of them." He answered. "Right now, I can access the physical strength of all the holders, but you guys know what happens to my body if I do that. Um, in terms of quirks, they say I'll be able to access more of them the more I train."

"They?"

"Oh, the past holders."

"You mean All Might?" Todoroki asked.

"No…" Izuku bit his lip, how was he supposed to explain this? "Um, every holder leaves a sort of imprint on the quirk that I can talk to if I'm in the right state of mind."

"Like ghosts?" Uraraka asked, trembling.

Izuku shrugged, "Yeah, kinda…that's how I think of them, at least."

"What a mad banquet of darkness…"

Even Aizawa looked overwhelmed by that revelation, "Ok, um, maybe don't mention the ghosts during the press conference. If someone asks about the other quirks, say that you are still learning to access all of them."

Izuku nodded and made a mental note to not mention the echoes of the past holders. He'd been freaked out by them at first, so it made sense that the general population would be too. It was oddly comforting to have part of his quirk that he still needed to keep a secret. He knew he should feel relieved that he could talk about his quirk now, but this whole situation still felt like a rug had been pulled out from under him because he was so used to having to keep it a

secret.

Kirishima smiled and raised his hand next, “So how did you catch All Might’s eye? Did you already know each other?”

Izuku chuckled awkwardly, “Actually, it’s kind of a funny story. He saved me from a villain, but he was running low on time...um, time in his muscle form...anyway, he tried to leave as soon as he made sure I was alright, but I really wanted to ask him...well, I ended up latching onto his leg right as he jumped to leave…”

“What?!” Iida chopped his arms frantically as he started scolding him. “That was incredibly reckless, Midoriya, you could have died! What question could be so important that you would endanger your life like that?!”

Izuku hesitated, “I wanted to know if a quirkless kid could be a hero.” He smiled sadly as a heavy silence fell over the class. “He said no, of course. I’d been expecting it, but it still hurt. I was just going to go home, but then I heard explosions in the distance and ended up going to watch the fight.”

“And All Might was there?” Jiro asked.

Izuku shook his head, “Not yet. It turned out that when I grabbed All Might’s leg, I made him drop the sludge villain that he’d caught when it was attacking me. It’d escaped and…”

“Wait, sludge villain?” Sero turned to Kacchan. “Weren’t you involved in a sludge villain attack, Bakugo?”

“I didn’t need that nerd’s help!” Kacchan exploded and whirled to face Izuku with explosions in his palms. “And I wouldn’t have been in that situation in the first place if it wasn’t for you Deku! I didn’t need you to run with no training, no quirk, no plan, no...”

“I couldn’t just let you die!” Izuku yelled, despite the fact that he knew Kacchan wouldn’t listen. He never had before.

“You little…!”

The explosions stopped as Aizawa wrapped Kacchan up in his capture weapon, “Calm down, Bakugo.” He then turned to Midoriya. “And you really ran into a dangerous situation without a plan or any way to defend yourself?”

“My feet just moved.” Izuku shrugged. “I know it was stupid, I just…wasn’t thinking.”

Aizawa sighed, “And that courage impressed All Might enough that he gave you his quirk so it would be easier for you to be a hero.”

Izuku nodded, “Yeah, he approached me after he saved both of us…again. And that was when he told me about One for All and offered it to me.”

Aizawa groaned, “Ok, if anyone asks how you were chosen, they’ll probably ask All Might, but if they do happen to ask you, don’t tell them that story.”

Izuku tilted his head in confusion, “What? Why not?”

“Because impressionable kids are going to be watching.” Aizawa said. “We don’t need them getting the idea that it’s okay to be reckless because they’ll attract the attention of pro-heroes.”

“Oh…” Izuku said quietly, “What am I supposed to say, then?”

“Just say that you impressed him with a heroic heart or something.” Aizawa rubbed the bridge of his nose. “Actually, you know what, just whatever they ask, give as short of an answer as possible, yes or no if you can, and don’t tell stories. Can you do that, problem child?”

Izuku nodded in determination, “Yes, Sensei!”

“Good.” Aizawa glanced at the clock. “Shit! The press conference is about to start. Yaoyorozu, is Midoirya’s suit ready?”

Yaoyorozu nodded, “Almost. I still need to make the tie.”

Jiro shoved the pile of clothes into Izuku’s hands and then shoved him toward the bathrooms. Yaoyorozu had done a really good job. He didn’t know if she had intentionally made it green to match his hair or if she just liked the color, but it was a dark pine color and well fitted to his frame. He dressed quickly and did an obligatory spin when he went back into the common room.

Ashido whistled, “Looking good, Midoirya! What do you think, Uraraka?”

Izuku turned to see Uraraka looking very red, was she having trouble breathing, “G-good looking…um, looking good!”

Yaoyorozu handed him a dark red tie and Izuku hesitated before grabbing it and giving it his best attempt. Dang it, this was hard enough when he wasn't in a rush with everyone watching him!

"You're hopeless, Deku! Just give it here!" Kacchan snatched the tie from around his neck and put it around his own. Within seconds, he had it tied in a perfect triangle and handed it back to Izuku.

Izuku tightened it, then turned to Aizawa, "Are you coming, sensei?"

Aizawa shook his head, "No, I don't want to deal with the vultures. Get going, you're already late." Izuku started running toward the door, but stopped when Aizawa spoke again "Oh, and Midoriya? Good luck."

Izuku smiled brightly, then activated full cowling and ran toward the front gates. He was already late, and he really didn't want to keep everyone waiting. All Might would be so disappointed in him and…

He skid to a stop on the platform that Cementoss had made and gulped as he realized that everyone was staring at him. There were so many people. Why were there so many people? Why had he had to draw so much attention? He shouldn't have used his quirk...

"Well that was quite the entrance!"

Izuku tore his eyes away from the crowd to see Nedzu and All Might, in his small might form of course, already sitting at the table that someone had set up. Nedzu was smiling at him and didn't *look* mad, but maybe he was just good at hiding it? All Might was smiling too, though, and Izuku knew him well enough by now to tell that the expression was sincere.

Izuku smiled sheepishly and sat down in the empty chair next to All Might, "S-sorry I'm late."

"Not a problem, my boy." All Might said. "We were just about to get started."

Izuku nodded and took a long drink out of the water bottle in front of him. He was All Might's successor. The ninth holder of One for All and the next symbol of peace. He could do this.

"Perfect!" Nedzu clapped his paws together and the crowd of reporters fell silent. "Now that everyone is here, let's get started. I would personally like to thank all of you for coming on such short notice."

Izuku hid a small smile. Of course Nedzu would make it seem like he had invited the reporters rather than them camping out in front of the gates until All Might answered their questions. It was a small thing that gave Nedzu the power over the situation and that was comforting enough that Izuku managed to take a deep breath and force himself to stop trembling.

“I am sure you have many questions,” Nedzu continued, “but before we open it up, All Might would like to make a statement.”

All Might cleared his throat and took a small stack of notecards from his pocket. Izuku could see how nervous he was. This was probably even worse for him because he’d kept the secret of One for All for decades rather than months like Izuku had. He gave him an encouraging smile despite the fact that All Might wasn’t looking at him.

“As I am sure you are all aware, this morning gave rise to some interesting rumors about my quirk and its history.” He took a deep breath. “These rumors are true.”

Nedzu held up a hand as the crowd exploded in sound, “Please hold your questions until the end, please. All Might?”

All Might nodded and took a sip of water, “The true name of my quirk is One for All and it is a sacred legacy that I received from my mentor, who received it from hers and so on and so forth. I chose to keep the nature of this power a secret for many reasons, but mostly because I believed that the nation needed to see their symbol of peace as a natural-born hero. Because One for All is anything *but* natural, I chose to simply keep my quirk a mystery. I hope that the people of Japan can find it in their hearts to forgive me for this deception, as I was only trying to protect and encourage them all these years.”

All Might flipped to a new notecard, “Since the article that revealed the true nature of my quirk this morning, there has been a lot of speculation that my quirk was stolen during my final battle with All for One.” Izuku felt more than saw the reporters leaning forward in anticipation. “These rumors are false. The power of One for All is like a torch in that I could still use the remnants of my quirk even after I had passed it on. All for One could not have stolen my quirk at Kamino Ward because it was already in the safe hands of my chosen successor.”

Izuku straightened slightly and tried not to hyperventilate as he

realized what was going to happen next.

“With that, I would like to introduce you to the young man sitting next to me.” All Might smiled. “This is the ninth holder of One for All, Izuku Midoriya.”

Izuku forced a shaky smile onto his face and gave a small wave as everyone turned to stare at him, “Hi…”

Nedzu smiled, “We will take your questions now.”

In the end, Izuku only had to answer a few questions. He tried really hard not to ramble, and by the time Nedzu announced the end of the press conference, he was actually feeling...well, comfortable wasn’t the right word, but he wasn’t paralyzed with fear either. The reporters hadn’t seemed to hate him either, which was always a positive, even if they hadn’t really known how to react to the revelation that both he and All Might had originally been quirkless.

Izuku knew he should go to class now. He’d be late, of course, but everyone would understand and Izuku really wasn’t the kind of person to cut class. But...he also didn’t feel up to seeing his classmates now that they’d had time to process that he’d kept such a big secret from them. Considering how they’d reacted when they assumed Izuku didn’t know about One for All, they must be feeling so betrayed! So in the end, Izuku found his feet leading him back to the dorms rather than to class 1A. Iida would be so disappointed!

Izuku closed the door to his room with a sigh and looked up at all his All Might merch. This was...a lot to live up to. It hadn’t been nearly so intimidating when nobody *knew* he was All Might’s successor, but now everyone knew about One for All and it was so much pressure and…

Maybe he’d have to ask Shinso to brainwash him later so he could talk to the other holders. Sure, none of them had dealt with this situation, but surely they must have some advice or they’d be able to point him in the direction of a more worthy holder. Yeah, he’d have to text him.

Oh, right, his phone, which was out of battery and probably full of a million missed calls, texts, and notifications, especially after the press conference. There were going to be so many! Maybe he should wait to turn on his phone until he felt a little less like he was drowning? No...he was finally alone and there was no way of knowing the next time he’d be able to have this much time to himself, so there was really no better time to deal with this. That didn’t mean he had to like

it.

Izuku took a deep breath and pressed the power button. It seemed to take even longer than usual to boot up, but maybe that was just the dread talking. He just wanted to get this over with! Finally, his phone finished turning on. It only took a few minutes for it to start buzzing frantically in his hand and once it started, it didn't seem to want to stop. Okay, he was the ninth holder of One for All, he could handle this.

The notifications were mostly expected. There were dozens from the various news sites and hero forums he subscribed to, but Izuku ignored those. There were also a few texts from his classmates, telling him to come down, or letting him know that they were there for him, which was nice. He ignored those for now, too. He would deal with them later.

Izuku winced when he saw the sheer number of missed calls from Mom. If even his friends were feeling betrayed, how would his mom feel? He knew he should have told her, but All Might said that it needed to be a secret and he couldn't disobey his hero after all he'd done for him and…

Mom had apparently realized that calling him wasn't going to work, because she'd eventually sent him a single text:

*Hey baby, I know you're not answering your phone and I'm sure you're feeling overwhelmed with everything that's happening, but I just want you to know that I'm here for you. I understand why you didn't tell me and I'm not mad, ok? Call me when you can.*

To his surprise, the time stamp was before the press conference so she had to have figured it out on her own. He hesitated only a moment before pressing the button to call her. The phone seemed to ring forever. What if she didn't answer? What if she'd changed her mind since her text and she hated him now and she'd never talk to him again and he'd have to live at UA forever and…

"Izuku? Baby?"

Mom's voice cut through his thoughts and Izuku smiled half-heartedly, "Hi Mom…"

"Oh sweetie!" Mom said. "I'm so proud of you!"

"B-but, I didn't tell you…"

Shouldn't she be disappointed? Shouldn't she be angry at him? He hadn't given her any reason to be proud.

From her voice, Izuku could tell that Mom was smiling, "I know you didn't tell me baby, but from what All Might said at the press conference, keeping it a secret wasn't your decision, was it?"

Izuku shook his head as he started to cry, "No."

"So there's no reason for me to be mad at you! And you did so well at the press conference!"

"Y-you watched it?"

"Of course I did, baby!" Mom laughed. "I was bawling the whole time! You seemed so nervous at the start, but then the reporters started asking questions and you were so dignified despite how intimidating they must have been! My baby's all grown up and handling the media like a pro!"

Izuku chuckled through the tears, "I didn't feel like a pro…it was really scary, Mom."

"I know, baby, but you did it! It's over!" Mom said. "But where did you get the suit? I didn't recognize it…"

Izuku glanced down at the suit that he was still wearing. He should really change. "Do you remember my classmate, Yaoryorozu, with the creation quirk? I think I told you about her one time. She made it."

"Well it looked really good one you, Izuku." Mom said fondly. "Be sure to thank her when you see her again, okay?"

"I will, Mom." He hesitated a long moment before deciding to bite the bullet and just ask, "When did you figure it out?"

There was silence on the other end for a minute before Mom responded, "I realized as soon as I saw the news this morning. All I could think about was that time when All Might came to talk to us about the dorms and he called you his successor. At the time, I thought it was only because he wanted you to be the next symbol of peace, but as soon as I realized his quirk could be passed on, then...and the way you developed a quirk so suddenly, when the doctor said it was impossible, and then you made it into UA and well, it was like all the puzzle pieces just fell into place! Izuku, I just want you to know how proud of you I am. You're handling so much and

you're doing so well. I'm so proud of you!"

Izuku heard some movement on the floor below him and looked at the clock. Oh, it was lunchtime already, so his classmates must have come back to the dorms, probably hoping to run into him.

"I'm scared, Mom." Izuku said finally. "I don't know if I can face my friends after this. What if they're not as understanding as you?"

"Well then, maybe they don't deserve you." Mom said. "But you need to give them a chance, Izuku. You can't just hide out in your room, fearing the worst, and never try to work things out."

Izuku pouted, "I'm not *hiding…"*

Mom laughed, "Good luck, Izuku. Come home for dinner this weekend, okay?"

Izuku smiled, "Sure thing, Mom. See you then."

Mom hung up and Izuku slowly changed back into his UA uniform. He knew he was stalling, but...what would Iida and Uraraka think? Could he really just go downstairs and talk to them? What if it wasn't them? What if it was the entire class? What if it was a villain?

Izuku shook his head and put his phone in his pocket. There wasn't any point in staying here and letting his anxiety get the best of him. He needed to stop worrying and just get this over with.

For the second time that day, Izuku walked down the stairs to the common room, but this time he *knew* the chaos was waiting for him. To his surprise, it was only Iida and Uraraka. They were in the kitchen and Iida was cooking something at the stove while Uraraka sat at the table looking up something on her phone.

Izuku cleared his throat awkwardly, "Um...hi guys…"

Uraraka looked up from her phone and stared at him for a long moment. Izuku was just about to turn and walk away since she obviously didn't want to be around him, when she smiled and jumped up. Suddenly, Izuku found himself wrapped in a tight hug and he didn't know if the reason he couldn't breathe was because Uraraka was so strong or because he was so shocked at the hug.

"Let him go, Uraraka!" Iida strode up to them, waving his spatula in the air, "Can't you see Midoriya is already overwhelmed? Such

conduct is undignified for UA students!”

“I-it’s ok, Iida!” Izuku said. “I’m fine…”

Uraraka pulled away and looked at him suspiciously, “No you’re not, don’t lie just to protect us.”

Izuku winced, “I’m sorry…”

“Why didn’t you tell us, Midoriya?” Uraraka had tears in her eyes now, and Izuku wished his quirk would let him just sink into the ground. “We’re your best friends…”

“I wasn’t allowed to tell anyone.” Izuku said softly. “Kacchan only figured it out because he’s known me since I was little. I…”

“Now Uraraka, our classmates sent us here to cheer him up, not make him feel worse.” Iida scolded.

Izuku’s eyes widened, “The whole class…”

“We didn’t want to overwhelm you with so many people.” Uraraka said. “Especially after the press conference this morning.”

Izuku nodded, “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you guys…”

Uraraka punched him lightly on the arm as Iida set three plates of food down on the table, “Well then, you’re just going to have to make up for it by telling us all the stories you’ve been keeping to yourself. I’m sure there’s got to be some good ones.”

Izuku chuckled as he started to cry again. Yes, things were never going to be the same after this, and the pressure to be the next All Might was still there, but he would get through this.

He’d been passed a sacred torch, after all.

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